

TESTIMONY OF ALTHEA H. COETZEE,  
NOMINEE TO BE DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR,  
U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Thank you, Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, members of the Committee. I am deeply honored to appear before you and the Committee today.

I would like to thank President Trump for nominating me to the position of Deputy Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration.

I would also like to thank Administrator Linda McMahon for her guidance and advice in this process. She is an inspirational leader and, if confirmed, I look forward to supporting her in achieving her vision to help America's small businesses and entrepreneurs achieve their maximum potential.

I would also like to thank the professional staff of the Committee for their time and assistance in the confirmation process.

Behind me today is my mother, Mrs. Althea F. Coetzee; my fiancé, DeWayne Leslie and his daughter and son-in-law, Casey and Tony Ramos; and several close friends and colleagues who have graciously come here to support me today. I know my dad would have loved to be here, and I can assure you he is looking down with a huge proud smile right now. My dad's love for his country and his pride in the United States were reflected in all he did. From the time I can remember, he and my mom instilled in me an entrepreneurial spirit that I can achieve my dreams: do whatever I set my mind to doing and be whatever I want to be. I am eternally grateful for my mother's unwavering support throughout my career, and for

the support of my fiancé and my friends, who constitute my extended “family” represented here today. I would not be here if it weren’t for you.

I am especially honored to be considered for the position of Deputy Administrator because of the importance of small business to President Trump. Kicking off National Small Business Week last Monday, he said,

“Small business owners embody the American pioneering spirit and remind us that determination can turn aspiration into achievement. This week, we affirm our commitment to removing government barriers to the success of American small businesses.”

I share our President’s commitment to small businesses, as well as Administrator McMahon’s commitment to ensuring the U.S. Small Business Administration successfully advances its mission. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting Administrator McMahon in her goals of providing the necessary tools for small businesses to gain access to capital; for entrepreneurs to receive relevant counseling services; and for small businesses—especially those owned by women, veterans, and minorities—to have opportunities for federal contracts.

I am excited to be considered for the Deputy Administrator position because my roots take me back to small business entrepreneurship. As a pre-teen, I started delivering newspapers for a neighbor, and was assigned 10-12 papers to deliver each afternoon. By the time I graduated high school, I had grown my newspaper enterprise into a total of five routes for both the morning and evening editions. I revisited this entrepreneurial spirit later in life. I am very proud to have started a small printing business with two other business partners. Like other entrepreneurs, we started with an idea, put together a business plan, and sought the capital to realize our goals. I can say that after only three months of opening, we were in the black and on our way. I have since sold my share of the business, but am pleased to say it is still going strong.

My experience in leading and managing organizations of all sizes in the military, public, and private sectors has uniquely qualified me for the position of Deputy Administrator. If confirmed, I will retire from the Navy as a 2-Star Rear Admiral, having achieved the highest rank attainable in my military career. I will leave my last post as the Chief of Staff to the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, managing a staff of 1,200 military, government civilians, and contractor personnel. In my roles with the Office of the Under Secretary, I have been responsible for oversight and execution of multiple programs and led cross-functional teams that support the mission of the Department of Defense. If confirmed, I look forward to applying that same oversight and execution to the mission of the U.S. Small Business Administration.

In my most recent assignments, I have directed and managed organizations ranging from 50 to over 10,000 personnel worldwide, with budgets exceeding a billion dollars. These include U.S.-based commands as well as humanitarian and combat forces deployed worldwide. I have been responsible for developing, approving, and managing budgets, personnel, logistics and supply chain operations, and innovative business information technology solutions for the Navy, Marine Corps, and Department of Defense. During periods of severe budget constraints, I have led efforts to recapitalize Enterprise Resourcing Planning solutions, and tied these efforts to zero-based reviews of staff and operations to devise the most efficient organization composition to operate within budget.

In my civilian career—in addition to owning a small business—I managed manufacturing engineering, quality engineering, and operations for a Fortune 100 medical device manufacturer before returning to government service as a civil servant to manage contracting operations for the Marine Corps.

In my 25-plus years as a contracting professional, I most recently managed seven geographically diverse satellite field offices in addition to the main operation. On military deployments, I was based in Djibouti, Africa but responsible for contracting activities located in Yemen and throughout Africa; and I was based

in Kabul and responsible for contracting activities throughout Afghanistan and as far off as Qatar. In my first such experience managing field offices, I came to appreciate the importance of ensuring all offices felt they were part of the mission, especially when it came to decisions that impacted the entire organization. In these organizations, as well as in other professional positions, I recognized the importance of “one team—one fight.” That is, no matter what the status of the employee—whether active or reserve military, government civilian or political appointee, or contractor—each is an integral part of the organization; each plays a vital role and is accountable for achieving the mission.

If confirmed, I look forward to advising Administrator McMahon on contracting matters to maximize opportunities for small businesses. I also look forward to applying my skills in managing geographically diverse organizations to ensure all SBA offices understand the mission and are equal partners in achieving the Administrator’s goals and objectives.

I am especially thrilled to be considered for the Deputy Administrator role because I see this as an opportunity to continue to serve my country in a new capacity where I can apply the skills that I have honed over careers in the military, public and private sectors to help the U.S. Small Business Administration successfully carry out its mission and to help small business owners achieve their dreams.

Once again, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to share my service, experiences and enthusiasm for the position of Deputy Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Thank you for your leadership, Chairman Risch and Ranking Member Shaheen. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you. I am happy to take your questions. Thank you very much.